Received April 13, 1769.

XIII. *A Letter from the Rev. Mr.* William Paxton, *Rector of* Buckland Brewer, *in the County of* Devon, *to Dr.* Milles, *Dean of* Exeter, *F. R. S. and Pr. S. A.*

Buckland Brewer, April 7, 1769.

REV. SIR,

Read April 20, 1769.

I HAD the favour of yours, and with great chearfulneſs comply with your requeſt, as far as faint words can expreſs what, in reality, is beyond the power of deſcription.

On Thurſday, the 2d of March, about four of the clock in the afternoon, a cloud, of a moſt uncommon blackneſs, gathered in the weſt-north-weſt, and, taking its courſe to eaſt-ſouth-eaſt, diffuſed a moſt prodigious darkneſs, accompanied with a very copious ſhower of hail. It paſſed immediately over the church tower (remarkable for the height both of its ſituation and ſtructure), and, burſting with incredible fury, poured forth an amazing body of fire, which threw down the ſouth-eaſt pinnacle on the church, and entering (as I ſuppoſe) at the breach, ſhivered a table on which the commandments were written, ſcorched and diſcoloured two tomb-ſtones, broke

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broke the windows, and ſhattered the walls and roof to a great degree. The ſouth-eaſt corner ſuffered moſt; where it chiefly forced its way, and tore up the ground on the outſide, where it found vent. There is ſomething very extraordinary in the diſperſion of the ſtones of the pinnacle to every point of the compaſs, and to different diſtances; ſome of which were 700 pounds weight. I picked up one that weighed almoſt 8 pounds, at the diſtance of 60 perches from the church; and doubt not but others, and perhaps larger ſtones, were carried further: it may be worthy remark alſo, that ſeveral of the ſtones, ſome of which were not ſmall, though they appeared cloſe and firm, yet, on a very ſlight impreſſion of the fingers, mouldered into powder. The exploſion, on the opening of the cloud, was as inſtantaneous as terrible, and equalled the diſcharge of at leaſt a hundred cannon at once.

It is matter of great wonder, that not only the church, but that every houſe in the village, which trembled to its foundation, was not reduced to atoms, or lighted up into a general blaze; and yet, ſtupendous mercy! not a man, woman, child, or beaſt, received the leaſt hurt. I am,

SIR,

Your very obedient,

humble ſervant,

William Paxton.

XIV. *Abſtract*